

The Birth of a Soul

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For Remembering the Adlers Memorial Meeting 2 Feb 2010

In my own brief tribute to Gerhard tonight, I want to comment on two particular psychological themes that had a real impact on my own life journey and subsequent emphasis in my own analytical work today. At the heart of Jung's work, which was faithfully continued by Gerhard, was the recognition and value that he accorded the 'religious function' of the psyche – the innate religious urge of our deeper self, or soul, which he regarded as an inborn need of the psyche which could not be neglected or violated without grave injury to psychic health and well being, particularly in the second half of life.

Both Jung's, and Gerhard's, particular interest and emphasis lay in what they regarded as the central role of experience or direct encounter with the numinous, sacred, holy or the Holy Spirit as an important and authentic way to a renewed faith in, and sense of, connection to the transcendent, or God, for many people nowadays and for the essential healing of our neuroses. He wanted the religious dimension of the psyche - the quest and longing for God or the sacred - to be seen as a natural and innate drive, as a 'fact' of the psyche, rather than as supernatural or only as an object of 'belief. He viewed his depth psychology as providing an essentially modern psychological bridge between traditional religious dogmas and faith – either Christian, Jewish or Muslim - and real, authentic and healing human experiences and encounters with the holy, the numinous or the Holy Spirit.

Jung was convinced that man's perennial religious impulse would rise again in self and society in new and creative ways, and his explorations took him back to the ancient past and the late medieval period, and forward to the world yet to be born. He knew that profound changes were happening both in society and in the psyche of modern men and women, and that fresh and new expressions of religion were both necessary and in the making. What Jung was looking forward to and was prophetically writing about in the 1940's and 1950's, which Gerhard continued to contribute to in his own time and generation, is now happening in many quarters in

our postmodern world. In Christian circles, it is called the spirituality revolution (which is the title of a well-known book by David Tacey discussing the subject in great depth). This is not religion in its old forms, but religion in the sense of mythos or sacred story - as a searching for, and re-connection to, all that is holy, and for me, personally, being fairly deeply immersed with the Christian story, how my little individual life is part of, and immersed in, a larger River of Life in ever more creative and transformative ways.

The other vital contribution of Jung, and continued by Gerhard, was his vocation as healer of the soul, viewing his depth psychology as a psychology of healing of our psychic difficulties, wounds and problems. He described a way of healing of human neuroses in terms of the journey of individuation, or the integration of psychological opposites, where unconscious material is raised to consciousness and is incorporated by it. Symbols of transformation are the vehicles and at the same time the products of what Jung called the transcendent function – that is, the psyche's symbol making capacity and enormous creative power towards the growth of new attitudes and perspectives and the facilitation of new paths of psychic and spiritual renewal. The transcendent function was one of the central tenets of Jung's model of psychological growth through dialogue with the unconscious, with application both as a vital clinical tool and understanding the workings and dynamics of everyday life with profound psychological and spiritual implications.

Gerhard's work closely followed these fundamental themes. One of his more particular emphases was his overriding interest to cultivate and investigate individual's quest for meaning, psychic integration and synthesis. He lectured on the subject to the Jung Institute in Zurich in 1962, which was subsequently published as one of the papers in his book *The Dynamics of the Self*. This book is an important contribution to literature on Jung's understanding of the self and the journey of individuation, as Gerhard reflects on, and summaries, forty years of his own analytic practice concerning individuals' quest for meaning and purpose within their own personal analysis, and comments on broader issues, tensions and paradoxes concerning related collective, social and existential questions and realities.

For Gerhard, facilitating and enabling individuals search for, and intimate relating to, their own inner psychic reality, through '*the struggle for an inner point of vantage, for knowledge of an inner reality in which the fragmentation of the other reality could find synthesis and new meaning*' was of paramount importance. Equally so was his particular love and passion for the wider creative milieu of the arts, music and literature. He understood the work of many of the 20th centuries leading artists, such as Kandinsky, Klee and Franz Marc as similarly reflecting an '*orientation inward, a turning toward the psychic centre and universal ground of all reality*', and viewed their artistic formulations as representing their affinity with the '*prophetic knowledge of the eternally, valid, archetypal world of the psyche –the Greater reality of the inner mystical construction.*'

Most of our own major life transitions, changes and transformations are usually within particular contexts and mileaux of meaning. My own positive memories of, and lifelong gratitude to, Gerhard falls within a particular personal context and life story. Much of my childhood and adolescence in Sydney, Australia, centred on my interest in religion and the local Christian church and community, and from a very young age I had always felt a strong connection and fascination with the deeper religious life. There had been many moments as a child - either in church, on retreat, or in the wild Australian 'bush' - which I would describe as religious or numinous experience, where a presence of something quite beyond me, which I recognised as a sense or touch of God, or something quite Other and Mysterious, had been unquestionably real and strong.

Through my adolescence, this 'awareness or fundamental connection' was almost totally buried and repressed, and by the time of my early adulthood, I felt lost and disorientated, living in a state of existential alienation and looking back, real suffering of soul. By the time I was 26, I had two degrees in psychology with distinction, was a qualified psychologist working hard in research and clinical work - yet, I felt as if I was dying on the 'inside' of hunger and thirst for the real things of the soul and Spirit. So I entered Jungian analysis with Gerhard in 1985 when I was 28. In this context and background, you can, perhaps, understand why the therapeutic relationship, and analytical work, with Gerhard began to change my life, as, for me, it was real 'soul food', which was gradually beginning to forge the beginning of the

way 'home' to an essential re-connection with my own soul and the reality of the Holy Spirit. I only worked with him for the last three years of his life, but it was enough for the real 'birth of my soul' to be initiated, and enough to instil faith and hope in the ongoing, lifelong, real transformative possibility of the deeper psychological and spiritual life.

Ariadne's invisible thread slowly, but very surely, began to unravel the all too often confusing, dark and disorientating labyrinth of psychic enquiry, observation and exploration. Through the continuous sense of slow, arduous psychological relatedness to, and recollection of, the many fragmented and disparate parts of my true self, I became more and more recollected and alive through my Jungian analysis and subsequent analytical training.

In summary, my brief work with Gerhard was central to facilitating and helping this journey 'home' - to my inmost Self, to the psychological journey of wholeness and integration, and opening my heart to God's calling for my own life.

2nd February, 2010